

## **Post-Event Summary Report**

**Name of Event:** South Carolina White House Conference on Aging

**Date of Event:** April 25-27, 2005

**Location of Event:** Springmaid Beach, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

**Number of Persons attending:** 399

**Sponsoring Organization(s):** Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging

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### **Priority Issue #1: Health Care**

Seniors, as well as other age groups, have been poorly educated on the importance of nutrition, immunizations, physical fitness, the dangers of tobacco use and chronic disease management. In addition few are actively participating in preventive strategies for better health. Lack of availability of chronic disease management and health prevention/wellness services result in increased senior health problems, healthcare costs and greater incidence of chronic illness.

### **Barriers:**

Funding, transportation, legislative process and agency bureaucracies, lack of knowledge of healthy lifestyles, apathy, disparity in services for minority populations, lack of knowledge of cultural diversity, ageism, access and affordability, lack of trained professionals, complicated and unclear language, language and cultural barriers (i.e. Hispanic), personal attitudes, lack of empathy from medical community

### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Raise the federal tax on tobacco products to fund the prevention and treatment of chronic disease.
2. Develop a federal Health Care Task Force of health care professionals and lay people to oversee the Medicare program and ensure scientifically based, cost effective, quality preventive care and treatment of acute and chronic disease.
3. Redirect existing funds and stimulate public and corporate cooperation with tax incentives, national tobacco tax, recycle health related equipment, financial incentives for adapting healthy life styles and ensuring affordable and quality health prevention and treatment programs for seniors.

## **Priority Issue #2: Need to Develop Senior Friendly Communities**

Seniors need and have the right to affordable, reliable, accessible transportation. Urban and rural senior friendly transportation is needed to promote independence and access to services.

### **Barriers:**

Money/funding, background checks, fragmented funding, liability, rising cost of fuel, lack of training, lack of coordination of services, lack of communication about services, automated telephone systems, availability of volunteers, single rides, lack of knowledge of replicable projects, variety of services as required by location – urban/rural.

### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Legislation that protects providers/entities from liability.
2. Remove restrictions on FTA funds to allow availability at a lower rate match to agencies that provide transportation to seniors, to allow expansion of transportation to access seniors to communities and services.
3. Develop and implement senior friendly, affordable, ADA compliant transportation for rural and urban communities which would allow seniors to remain independent.

## **Priority Issue #3: Long Term Care and Continuum of Care**

Restructure Medicaid/Medicare and develop private and personal funding incentives for financing and providing additional flexible options for LTC continuum.

### **Barriers:**

Lack of available funds, political turf wars, increased population, how care is financed, passing-the-buck attitude, lack of interest, federal regulations, lack of coordination between federal and state programs, lack of training in Geriatrics, entitlement mentality, lack of state and federal representatives demonstrating interest, inappropriate Medicaid asset transfers, institutional bias, lack of education about programs available, language and cultural differences, lack of education for politicians on the needs of seniors, wartime economy

### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. To educate the public and policymakers regarding the needs of the population for LTC services, current resources, description of services and the need for increased flexibility and reimbursement to reflect the true cost of quality care.
2. To establish a coalition to educate policymakers and elected officials, at the national, state and local levels, about restructuring Medicare/Medicaid to deal with current and projected issues.
3. To establish a program of equitable co-pay, based on income and assets for any person in the US or its territories who accesses the continuum of care.

## **Priority Issue #4: Caregiving**

The National Family Caregiver Support Program does not adequately address the needs of the two target populations: the caregivers taking care of seniors 60 and older, and seniors 60 and older caring for dependent children age 18 and younger.

**Barriers:**

Government/politics, lack of awareness of caregiving epidemic, funding issues, business and industry cooperation, adequate support services often not available, inadequate family/caregiver financial resources, unfair distinction in the system between rural and urban areas, lack of awareness of what it is to be a caregiver, lack of uniform national services, lack of coordination and collaboration, caregiver denial/embarrassment/isolation/confidentiality leads to reluctance to ask for help, age eligibility requirements

**Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Increasing the Title III E funding to meet the growing needs of caregivers;
2. Add additional staff for advocacy (elected officials and public), training and support; and
3. Empowering the caregiver through maintained flexibility and consumer direction.

**Priority Issue #5: Planning for the Future**

There is a need for a quality comprehensive, coordinated information system that links agencies, organizations, and individuals to resources to support seniors and a plan to communicate those services to improve seniors' quality of life.

**Barriers:**

Inadequate funding, ineffective communication, political ignorance, standards of quality, lack of coordination between existing programs, redundancy, weak organizations

**Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Create a national task force to educate the politicians on the need for adequate funding for a comprehensive high quality information system.
2. The Department of Health and Human Services should develop a partnership among federal agencies and the private sector to fund and implement a national information system network.
3. Implement a sustained multimedia educational initiative informing the public and the appropriate agencies about available services and resources and services for older adults.

**Priority Issue #6: Housing**

There is a lack of proper and sufficient funding for adequate, affordable and accessible housing and supportive services for all seniors.

**Barriers:**

Red tape, lack of knowledge (government, seniors, family, and community) about housing needs/choices and the supportive services needed to age in place, annual budget cuts for new housing and subsidized housing programs, funding for senior housing is not a legislative priority, lack of economic resources, partisan politics and "pork barreling", insensitivity to senior issues, international issues versus local issues, apathetic public and government officials' attitudes towards public policy, resistance to change

**Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Take care of home first by reallocating some funds presently allocated to international issues to accessible housing and supportive services for all seniors.

2. Provide federal financial incentives to the states to encourage partnerships and collaborative efforts to educate legislators, community leaders, seniors, and families on the need for and availability of various housing options.
3. Modify the Older Americans Act to change the WHCoA to being held every 5 years in order to more frequently evaluate and modify national policy related to senior issues including, but not limited to, senior housing needs.

### **Priority Issue #7: Impact of Alzheimer's Disease**

The impact of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in the United States is costing families, businesses and government billions of dollars. The number of people who will be affected by these diseases will reach epidemic proportions within the next decade.

#### **Barriers:**

Ignorance, competition for funds, tendency to address crises rather than fund prevention activities, persons with dementia cannot advocate for themselves; caregivers are often burned out, stigma related to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, cost of war is impacting funding for other priorities, lack of collaboration with research on other prevention initiatives, competition between agencies, unwillingness to take personal responsibility for healthier lifestyles, cultural barriers, nobody wants to increase taxes

#### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Urge Congress to recognize and acknowledge the impending epidemic of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and its impact on families, businesses and government.
2. Recommend that Congress enact legislation to support prevention, education and research on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in order to delay onset of dementia and curb associated financial burdens.
3. Funding to support this legislation should be a minimum of one billion dollars yearly for the next five years.

### **Priority Issue #8: Research**

Establish a patient centered model of collaboration among health care/and human service providers, researchers, insurance companies and drug companies to promote lifestyle changes and preventive care.

#### **Barriers:**

Lack of collaboration among government agencies for research funding, lack of self accountability (quick fix mentality), focus on treatment rather than prevention, strong lobby by drug industries for treatment versus prevention, lack of public awareness of research findings, health insurance does not provide coverage for preventive services, patient/provider trust issues, lack of communication between providers and patients, geriatrics is a low prestige research specialty, inadequate reimbursement for Medicare, lack of funding in the aging field, lack of interest among funding resources in prevention, aging research lacks urgency in our society

#### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Increase funding for wellness and preventative research.
2. Include evidence based outcomes in research.

3. Inform and educate all stakeholders about wellness and preventive care research.

### **Priority Issue #9: Workforce Issues**

We are not adequately preparing for an aging workforce or providing options to enhance & encourage continued employment.

#### **Barriers:**

Age discrimination and unsubstantiated myths of older workers, work place disincentives to remaining employed in the concept of retirement as a required rite of passage, challenges of low skilled, low income older workers with multiple barriers to employment who must work to maintain the basic essentials of life including food, shelter, clothing and medical care, unavailability of meaningful training/retraining, reluctance of employers to explore work options

#### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. Educate the business community and market the value of older workers and their ability to learn and adapt.
2. Encourage public and private research, that identifies employer and employee needs and interests of an aging workforce.
3. Offer adequate training and funding in traditional or non-traditional settings that targets seniors.

### **Priority Issue #10: In-Migration**

Federal allocations of resources to address the Medicaid eligible population and other services for the older population need to more aggressively take into account the rapid in-migration of the retiring population among the states, rather than basing allocations only on census data.

#### **Barriers:**

Categorical allocations for services from federal level limit the ability of the states to address locally documented needs, precedents, or “that is the ways things have always been done,” hinder progress, dependence on outdated census data prevents equitable resource distribution in the “between Census” years, especially in fast growing states, opening the discussion of resource allocation usually sets in motion opposition from the various special interest groups, the resistance of Congress to work on a bipartisan basis prevents the achievement of positive change, the complexity of issues requires significant expenditure of time to achieve satisfactory solutions

#### **Proposed Solution(s):**

1. The federal government shall allow states greater flexibility to address state and local level needs with budget appropriations.
2. For a more favorable allocation of federal resources, the method to determine each state’s allocation of federal funds shall be updated on a mid-decade basis.
3. Encourage more active participation of the private sector as arbiters and consensus builders in the political process of finding solutions to aging issues.